

Reunification Scenario: Suspicious Package at Carver Middle School

In your small group, select a group recorder and reporter. Work through the reunification scenario and questions and be prepared to share and discuss your responses with the larger group.

Part 1: The Crisis and Response

On the first day of school at Carver Middle School, new principal, Harvey James is informed by a frantic custodian of a suspicious package found just outside of the school building on the loading dock of the school.

Harvey receives this information approximately 30 minutes into the school day at 9:30 am. To assess the credibility of the possible threat, Harvey runs to the loading dock with the custodian. Upon sight of the unexpected package, unlabeled, placed by itself on the loading dock with multiple wires and electrical components visible through a hole in the top of the box, Harvey enters the nearest classroom. There he uses the PA-enabled phone to call a school wide evacuation to the athletic field. During his announcement, he instructs all students and staff to refrain from the use of cell phones and electronics until further notice. He calls 911 to report the situation to police and then facilitates the school wide evacuation.

- Discuss the immediate actions and responses of the custodian and principal.
- What is your school/district's protocol for a scenario like this?

Part 2: Planning for Relocation

Seven hundred students and staff are quickly and safely evacuated to the school athletic field by 9:45am. Police and bomb squad arrive on scene to assess the package and clear the building. Harvey is informed that due to the suspicious appearance of the package, and the circumstances surrounding it, the assessment may take several hours. It is unlikely that students will be able to return to the building that day. Harvey must now make arrangements to return students home. By evacuating the students to the athletic field, Harvey has removed them from potentially immediate danger in the building; however, the athletic field offers no protection from the sun and heat nor is there the ability to provide lunch or safely continue instruction for the remainder of the day.

As Harvey begins planning to relocate the student body to another location for parent-child reunification, he relies on his assistant principal, guidance counselor, related arts teachers (art, P.E. library, etc.), and grade level team leaders to help provide for the immediate needs of students and teachers. Most staff members have left the building without personal items such as purses and car keys; although, several staff members have their cell phones and a few male staff members have their wallets and driver's licenses.

- How might the staff provide for immediate needs of students?
- Bathrooms?
- Water? Snacks?
- Entertainment?
- Medical needs of students and staff?



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Part 3: Communication

Harvey crafts a message to send out to parents informing them of the safety of students and the plan to announce a reunification location. The message tells parents they will not be able to come to the school but they will receive information and instructions for student reunification within the next hour.

- What message would you provide to parents in this scenario? Draft your message as a group.

- Ideally, who from your school community would deliver the message?

- What communication methods can be used to deliver the message and further information?

- How will you handle cell phone use by students?

- How will you handle media inquiries during the crisis?

- How can you prepare for media on scene?

- How can your school community prepare for emergency communication *ahead* of a crisis like this?

Part 4: Off-site Reunification

Harvey has identified three potential reunification sites for his students, each of which will require transporting students by bus across a major highway. Harvey contacts the transportation office to begin coordinating bus transportation with the district-owned fleet.

Review each potential location (see attached maps) that is available for immediate use. Select location and decide on reunification method to be used (i.e. drive through, traditional park, pick up). Assume that students can be transported to the reunification site by 11:30 am.

What was your rationale for selecting that reunification site?

Part 5: Preparing for Reunification

Having selected the location for this reunification, choose a reunification team. Pick staff members and/or available human resources (i.e. first responders, parents, etc.) that could serve in each role of the reunification team. Envision and share examples with your group of actual staff members in your school or district that would be ideal for each role.

Lead:

Greeters:

Runners:

Checkers:

Accountants:

Scribes:

Herders:

Entertainers:

Reunifiers:



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- Using the map of your relocation site, decide the reunification layout at the site. Where will you place each of the critical stations and key team members?
- With your reunification set up, staff members in place at the site, and students now on site in holding, how you will notify parents?
- What will your message be? Craft a message as a group.

Part 6: Additional Considerations: How will you handle these?

- Students attempting to use cell phones during the evacuation to the athletic field.
- Parents beginning to arrive at the school site despite instructions.
- Local media arriving on scene.



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- Non-custodial parent arrives at reunification site, demanding to child.

- A parent arrives with no ID on hand.

- Neighbor of student arrives, claiming that the child's parent asked her to pick up child.

- A parent has lost patience with the process, breaks the line, and heads into the building.

- If this reunification had taken place at a high school, some students may be 18 years old. Would you allow self-release? If so, how would you communicate this to parents?

- A special needs student has become overly anxious during the unexpected evacuation and transition to the unfamiliar relocation site. (How could you prepare special needs students ahead of crises?)



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